



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #692

August 10, 2006



Dr. Vernon Chong, Chairman
Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman
Leo P. Burke, Board Member
Colin Shadell, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, Sacramento, California at 3:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Jake I. Alarid, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Colin Shadell, Member

Absent: Leo P. Burke, Member
Chairman Chong presided

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CLOSED SESSION

OPEN SESSION

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. He also introduced Secretary Thomas Johnson of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

A) Governor's Policies

Robert Glazier, Communications Director for the Governor's office spoke regarding what the Governor's office was expecting from the Board. He explained that the Board was to be an extension of the Governor's Office and the Department. Further, to assist the Department and veterans by going to the homes, attending veterans' events and meetings across the State so that veterans can express their needs and concerns to the Board who, in turn, can bring them back to the Secretary. In traveling across the State, the Board should be aware of the priorities of the Department so that they are able to support them. One of the challenges with other boards has been whether the board is to act as a watch dog or ombudsman, but the statutes of the Governor has not defined the Board in this manner, and instead wants them to work together with the Department to ensure the Governor's policies, as enacted by the legislature, are carried out. The staggered Board member terms in specialized areas ensures a fresh infusion of new ideas and the ability to reach out to the different segments of the veterans.

Chairman Chong asked Mr. Glazier to elaborate on the issue of whether the Board should have oversight over the Department. Mr. Glazier responded that the Board has a responsibility to follow the activities of the Department and review reports and updates to ensure it's sticking to the deadlines it sets and meeting its obligations. Also, making sure there's public discussion and that the Board represents the veterans and the Governor across the state to ensure the Department is doing its job. The Governor expects the Board and the Department to work together to meet the veterans' needs and function as a partnership, rather than as a taskmaster. Secretary Johnson advised that the Department is audited by a number of different departments. Chairman Chong pointed out that the Board did not have the manpower or resources to function as an oversight body.

Member Bressette questioned how Mr. Glazier reconciles that state law empowers the Board with the ability and the role to set policy for the Department. He also noted that during his confirmation interview with Senator Perata's Office, they disagreed with Mr. Glazier's definition and felt the Board should take a more active role in setting policy. Mr. Glazier responded that there are others who would see a different role and function for the Board, but that he could only speak for the Governor's Office and how they see the role for the Board and the Department. The Governor expects policies to be worked out as a team.

Chairman Chong posed the question to Mr. Glazier as to how the Board should respond when asked by various groups to support pending legislation. He responded that in the past, the Board has taken positions on legislation, but it's not something the Secretary will do unless in concert with the Governor's office. There's nothing to stop the Board from taking positions and making recommendations because they are an independent Board. But sometimes in taking a position it may be in contradiction to what the Governor is planning on doing, and in that regard, in speaking for the Governor's office, it's hoped the Board would try to help the Governor attain his policies to carry out the things he would like to have done for the veterans. Mr. Glazier further explained that the Governor's Office will not normally take a position on legislation until it's in a final form.

Chairman Chong thanked Mr. Glazier for taking the time to speak with the Board.

B) Mission Statement

The Board discussed the input provided by the members for the mission statement and finalized it as follows:

The California Veterans Board serves as an advocate for Veterans affairs identifying needs and working to ensure and enhance the rights and benefits of California veterans and their dependents.

RECOMMENDATION

Board member Astafan moved for adoption of the mission statement as read. Board member Shadell seconded.

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: Leo Burke

Chairman declared the motion carried. (statement attached)

C) Vision, Goals and Objectives

After discussing the vision statement, the Board amended it to read:

The vision of the California Veterans Board is to be recognized as one of the prime advocates for California veterans' rights and benefits.

RECOMMENDATION

Board member Bressette moved for adoption of the vision statement as amended. Board member Astafan seconded.

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: Leo Burke

Chairman declared the motion carried. (statement attached)

The Board discussed the values and amended them to include the following bullet:

*To work in concert and partnership with the Secretary and Department of Veterans Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION

Board member Astafan moved for adoption of the values as read and amended. Board member Alarid seconded.

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: Leo Burke

Chairman declared the motion carried. (statement attached)

It was the Board's decision to table the Goals and Objectives and assign them to a committee to review and refine.

D) Committee Structure and Assignments

The Board reviewed and revised the committee structure and determined chairmen for each committee. It will be up to the chair of each committee to decide when and how they will meet. Minutes will not be required for committee meetings, but a brief summary should be reported to the Board during its regular meeting. Chairman Chong reminded the Board that outside members could be invited to participate on the committees, such as past Board members, Department staff or members of the community.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:00 P.M.



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #693
August 11, 2006



Chairman Vernon Chong
Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman
Leo P. Burke, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member
Colin Shadell, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, Sacramento, California at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Jake Alarid, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Colin Shadell, Member

Absent: Leo Burke (Excused)

Chairman Chong presided

OPENING CEREMONIES

A) INVOCATION

B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C) OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIR

Chairman Chong explained that the format of the meetings has been changed. Public comments will be on the agenda earlier so that members of the audience will have an opportunity to speak. The Board or Secretary will also attempt to answer any questions by the audience with the intent of making the meeting more interactive. The Chairman also noted that several members of the executive staff from the Department are in attendance and will be giving division reports today.

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. Chairman Chong introduced Mr. Thomas Johnson, the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

Secretary Johnson welcomed the group to Sacramento and pointed out that it's the 60th Anniversary for the Department which was formed in 1946. The Secretary introduced his staff, Undersecretary Roger Brautigan; Deputy Secretary and Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Chief of Construction Division Dr. Robert Johnson, Chief of Veterans Services Jack Kirwan and Deputy Secretary for Communications and

Legislation J.P. Tremblay, Deputy Secretary of Homes Bill Parente, and Chief of Operations John Hanretty; Yvette Kelley, Administrative Assistant and Marcella McCormack, the Administrator of the Yountville Veterans Home.

MINUTES

Executive Officer, Bonnie Kelly

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held July 6 and 7, 2006

Board member Bressette moved to approve July 6 and 7, 2006 minutes. Board member Shadell seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: Leo Burke

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS

- A) Chairman Chong read and presented a resolution to former Board member, James Crump.
- B) Chairman Chong noted that the Board has prepared a resolution for former Board counsel Howell Jackson who was unable to be present today.
- C) Chairman Chong presented a certificate of appreciation to the past Executive Officer, Sandra Munoz.

VETERANS HOMES ADMISSION AND DISQUALIFICATION POLICIES

Chairman Chong introduced Marcella McCormack, Administrator, Yountville Veterans Home who attended the meeting to make a PowerPoint presentation to educate the Board on admission and disqualification policies. Ms. McCormack introduced Dr. Winne, Board Certified Gerontologist, also from Yountville and on the Admissions and Appeals Committee, who assisted Ms. McCormack in her presentation and answered questions on Yountville's policies and procedures.

Copies of the presentation are available upon request.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sanford Ross

James Crump

M.C. Lockwood

Dr. David Salopek

Mel McMead

OLD BUSINESS

1. Proposed Policy C-12 Resident Participation in Health Service Plans

The purpose of this policy is to maximize resident participation in federal, state, and private health service plans and to ensure that the Department seeks reimbursement for health care that is provided to the residents of the California Veterans Nursing Homes.

This policy was discussed at the last meeting and it was decided that some of the wording needed to be revised. An additional bullet was added: "Henceforth, veteran applicants, if eligible for state, federal or VA medical programs, must apply for such programs in order to be admitted to the home. Once admitted, veteran residents must continue to be a participant in such programs as a condition of continuing residency."

RECOMMENDATION

Board member Bressette moved for adoption of Policy C-12. Board member Alarid seconded.

AYES: Board members Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Chong, and Shadell.

NOES: None

Absent: Leo Burke

Chairman declared the motion carried. (Policy attached)

2. Policy C-2. Disqualifying Conditions

The purpose of this policy is to delineate areas of care and diagnoses for which the veteran's homes are not designed.

After discussion, it was decided this policy would be referred to the Policy and Procedures Committee to address the revisions needed for approval.

DEPARTMENT FORUM

A. Department Update

Secretary Johnson advised that relative to the homes, Barstow and Chula Vista have the highest census they've had in the last three years, and Yountville is at 90%.

1. Military Advisory Council – J.P. Tremblay

The Governor will be establishing, with an Executive Order, a Military Affairs Advisory Council within a week. The purpose of the Council is to advise the Governor relative to military affairs. It will be comprised of one representative from each branch of the armed services. It is structured this way so that the Governor can be apprised of issues impacting the men and women who are active in the armed services and their families who are living here in California to help them navigate through the diverse state agencies and departments on many issues they may face.

2. Communications Projects – J.P. Tremblay

Mr. Tremblay advised that he started June 1st and has made it his goal/objective to improve communications within the Department and within the various constituency groups throughout the communities and the State. The News for Vets is put out once a week, and more often if newsworthy items arise. This publication goes to veteran service organizations, county service officers, and all of the homes. Beginning September 1st, a monthly Department newsletter will be reinstituted to talk about what California is doing for its veterans. A mock up of a newsletter that will go out every other month from the Board was sent to the members for review. The mailing list consists of 1500 contacts. Mr. Tremblay noted that he's also working on a newsletter for the commanders and the various VSOs that will be comprised of information that will be of interest to their organization. It will be in an electronic format and will allow access to our website where we will have a page specifically for commanders.

3. FSR for Electronic Medical Records/Health Information System – John Hanretty

Mr. Hanretty discussed the VHIS replacement. The veterans home information system that is currently in place is operated/owned by a proprietary company named Meditech. One year ago, the contract with Meditech fell into a dispute regarding indemnification language and the State was unable to resolve that dispute. It was temporarily addressed and we are still operating Meditech. At

the same time we are building new veterans homes. We are now preparing a feasibility study report which is an analysis of what is the best platform for us to use as a veteran home information system in preparation for a budget change proposal. This will be put into place to get us to the ultimate goal of having as good of an integrated clinical record as we can with the USDVA. We have consultants now on board that are attempting to complete the FSR by the end of August. Once that is completed, we have a budget change proposal for the first stage which will be going in during October, and we will be providing the Board copies of those documents. We will not be going to bid for this system until next year.

Mr. Hanretty advised a need to be on next month's agenda, as an RFP is being sent out for a new quantitative consultant for the Farm and Home Program. The cash flow consultant basically supports all of the bond sales, continues to manage forecasting of all loans that are out in the program, as well as bond expenses in the program. This position is critical to the success of the program. The contract expires at the end of this calendar year. The RFP will be brought to the Board in accordance with the Board's policy to review all RFP's over \$250,000.

Mr. Hanretty distributed copies of a handout (available upon request). The Farm and Home program is going through an analysis of various options that will be brought to the Board, as well as the legislature. The two handouts are designed to show you primarily one thing. A picture of all of the loans we have made by year, and have made for the last five or six years - \$600,000,000 worth of loans since 1999-2000 down to around \$300,000,000 for the past year. At the bottom of the chart, you will see that this is QVMB money. QVMB money is available for eligible veterans who have been discharged from thirty years from 1997. That population is beginning to decline. We have plenty of bonding authority, both from the State voters, and we have \$400,000,000 from the Budget Bond Act of 2000 that we could issue loans in if we had eligible veterans for those loans. We also had a cap in the federal government of \$340,000,000, but in 2005-06 the QVMB funding has gone down over those years from roughly \$200,000,000 to \$48,000,000, so that eligibility is declining. The Department made a big push, as well as other states, to get the federal tax law amended to include all veterans into the QVMB funding which are tax exempt available bonds. The tax exemption at the federal level is what gives us a financial edge to be able to issue low interest rates to our veterans. HR 4297 was the House Resolution which the Board supported. It has now been modified to a point where we have a volume cap where we can only issue \$13,000,000 worth of bonds during the course of the year, and the program is sunset five years from now. We rallied Texas, and Texas and California were pulled out of the bill. The other three states that do farm and home loan programs for veterans stayed in the bill because they have much smaller needs than California or Texas. We're going to go back and look at that bill again and try to get an amendment to get a volume cap at what we think we need, which is probably \$2-300,000,000 a year, and not include a sunset provision. This will take time and not be accomplished next year. The unrestricted pot of money was opened for eligibility to all veterans. This is a limited amount of money – roughly \$400,000,000 and we have no way to seek new money for those eligible veterans. We're going through an analysis now to determine how we can slow down the intake or divvy up the money until we can get the federal law changed two years from now. Mr. Hanretty advised the Board that the Department will be coming to them within the next sixty days with some options to consider.

4. Capital Project Report for CDVA – Dr. Robert Johnson

Dr. Johnson reported that there are a long series of projects called the Yountville Heritage Project which is meant to bring Yountville into the twenty-first century. We have three projects currently under construction. One is the Annex 1 renovation which will provide a 75 bed sniff unit specifically for Alzheimers/dementia patients. We have been delayed in the completion of that project due to contractor issues, but expect to have beneficial occupancy by November. The second project is the renovation of the aged and failing electrical transmission system. This project is complete, but has a minor issue with

the walkie talkies to work out. The third project is renovating the 1.25M gallon storage tank and transmission lines to balance treatment plant flows and emergency storage. This project has been stalled due to unanticipated site conditions. The problem has been corrected, but the contractor has withdrawn. DGS must now contract with another firm. A new project schedule is being developed and work can resume.

The next series of projects for Yountville are the renovation of the Member Services Building to meet fire/life/safety codes and requirements. This is in the preliminary planning stages and waiting for Federal grant funding. Another project in the preliminary planning stages is an infrastructure assessment of existing structures and planning for future appropriate uses and renovation. This project is in the contractor bid period and is scheduled for completion by June 2007.

Future projects for Yountville that remain on the USDVA State Home Grant Program priority list for future funding include: Steam Distribution System renovation, telecommunications and data network renovation, Administration Building renovation and a renovation of the chapel. Copies of his handouts are available upon request.

5. Educational Outreach Report/Job Fairs – Jack Kirwan

Mr. Kirwan reported the on the current educational outreach efforts being conducted by the Department. The Department and the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency are partnering to direct a statewide initiative to transition recently separated veterans into careers. This initiative is designed to provide veterans with education, employment, training, and benefit resources that will assist them with finding employment in high-wage, high skill occupations. Resources will be offered via a series of job and resource fairs designed for recently separated veterans and their unique needs. Regional program partnerships can apply for competitive grant funding support from the State if they adopt the state-developed job and resource fair model. A total of ten fairs per year are proposed throughout the State with a funding limit of \$25,000 per fair.

Mr. Kirwan also reported that The California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership Oversight Committee has been appointed by the Governor to discuss educational issues between California's public colleges and universities and the military. It will provide policy direction and guidance to both state and military organizations on key active duty and eligible veteran's issues. California higher education began to implement the California Veterans Education Opportunities partnership in May 2006. Five task force committees have been appointed by the Veteran's Workgroup.

Copies of his handouts are available upon request.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

No legislative issues were discussed.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:05 a.m.